

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Rarity Rank: S2N,S3B/G5

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Identification:

- A very large raptor
- Adult with dark brown body, white head and tail, and large, yellow bill
- Immatures are dark brown with pale underwing coverts, irregular light base of tail and black bill
- Subadults intermediate between immatures and adults and exhibit various amounts of white mottling on body
- 4 to 5 years required to attain adult plumage
- Wings very long, broad and rounded at the tip with primary feathers often widely separated; wings held flat when soaring
- Adults to 1.1 m in length with wingspread to 2.3 m



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Habitat:

- Nests primarily in the tops of cypress trees near open water
- Feeds in open lakes

Food habits:

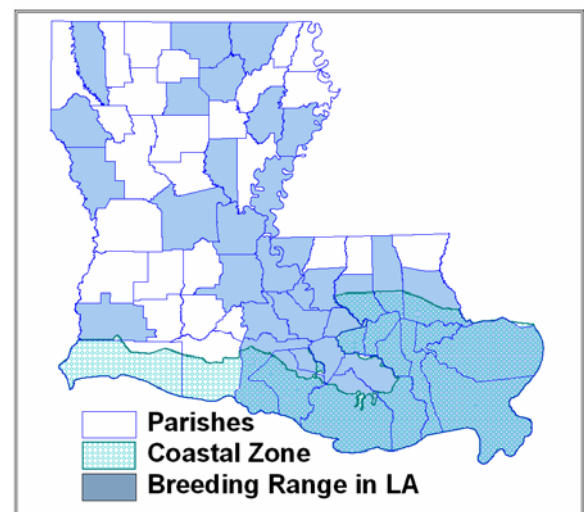
Feeds on fish, either self-caught or robbed from other birds (especially ospreys), as well as carrion, waterfowl, coots, muskrats and nutria

Range:

- Breeds throughout the United States, southern Canada and Baja California, although it is rare away from the coast
- Winters throughout the United States along river system, large lakes, or coastal areas
- In Louisiana, nests primarily in southeastern coastal parishes and, occasionally on large lakes in northern and central parishes, but these nests are less successful

Reproduction:

- Louisiana birds nest in winter and early spring
- Nests very large (up to 2.5 m across and 3.5 m deep) and used year after year
- Alternate nests may be constructed by breeding pair, and the birds may alternate between the two nests annually



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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- Usually up to 3 eggs per clutch
- Incubation period about 35 days; young fledge 72 to 78 days after hatching

Threats:

- Accumulation of pesticide residues (especially DDT) caused thinning of egg shells, which reduced reproductive success rate
- Loss of habitat
- Human disturbances to nesting pairs during nesting season

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Annual nesting surveys conducted to determine productivity
- Midwinter surveys of non-nesting birds
- Hacking program, where newly hatched young are moved to areas with no eagles, hand reared, and released, in hope that they will return to the release site to nest
- Protection of nest sites through Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Natural Areas Registry Program

LA River Basins:

Atchafalaya, Barataria, Mississippi, Ouachita, Pearl, Pontchartrain, Red, Sabine, Terrebonne, Vermilion-Teche



Bald Eagle Nest



Photo by Larry Korhnak

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage or call 225-765-2811

www.BTNEP.org or 1-800-259-0869